



PATRIOT, FIGHTER, HUMANIST

Nelson *Mandela*



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An Anniversary

On Nelson Mandela's 70th birthday, July 18, 1988, the *Beeld*, South Africa's influential government newspaper published in Afrikaans, unexpectedly declared that Mandela ought to be released. "If we are waiting for a more suitable time to free Mandela, we can say now that time will never arrive," it stressed.

This announcement is all the more curious since the executives of the *Beeld* have very close connections with South Africa's leadership; its Editor-in-Chief is well in with President Botha and Information Minister Stoffel van der Merwe.

The *Beeld* found itself in the same camp as South Africa's English-language press, which has traditionally been in opposition to the government. On that day all the papers demanded Mandela's release.

His friendship with the Editor-in-Chief did not prevent Information Minister van der Merwe from sharply condemning the *Beeld* for such an "irresponsible" announcement. He reminded the paper that Mandela had been convicted in accordance with the law and that the law still stood.

That was not the end of the matter. The *Beeld* was quick to respond to the criticism and proceeded to put the blame on van der Merwe, thereby questioning his reputation as a liberal and an advocate of reform.

Observers noted that there had never previously been such public exposure of attitudes concerning Mandela. What had happened? What had brought about the fresh outburst of discord within the ruling elite?

It has to be said that there had been earlier arguments in the "noble family" over the issue of Nelson Mandela's further imprisonment. They, however, had never caused such an uproar, especially not at such an unsuitable time for the regime.

Of course this may be attributed to the increasing tensions in the domestic political situation: pressure on the white minority government has been mounting on all sides. The anti-apartheid movement inside the country involves

the black as well as the white population. The economic situation in South Africa is not improving, despite all the government's efforts. New chunks are dropping away from the white monolith; the former Afrikaner unity has long been non-existent, and in fact differences between the Afrikaners over many basic issues of South Africa's development are becoming intensified. The main problem is how to break the political deadlock into which the National Party has plunged the country during its rule. How to avoid sliding towards the abyss of a bloody civil war?

Sober-minded Afrikaners and the ruling elite have different answers to these questions.

And as South Africa's internal political situation grows more and more complicated, disputes become more frequent.

It has to be said at once, however, that these differences within the Afrikaner elite are mostly concerned with tactics, not strategy. One must not jump to the conclusion that the *Beeld's* "rebellion" was due to humanitarian considerations. Its Editor-in-Chief hardly worried about questions of justice and the gross violation of the rights of the man who had been jailed in order to enhance one of the numerous myths of apartheid. The Editor-in-Chief belongs to the group of influential Afrikaners who consider Mandela's release to be a wise diplomatic move that can lessen tension and strengthen the government's positions; that is the only reason why he dared to polemicize with the President.

This particular line of argument runs as follows: Mandela has become the symbol and banner of the black majority's struggle and of the worldwide movement against apartheid. His name, previously little known, is now known even to children in other countries. In jail he acquired the aura of a martyr suffering for his people. The African National Congress stands to gain from having such a martyr. It is easy to unite the people and direct their struggle in his name. Therefore Mandela has to be deprived of this aura by releasing him from jail. This would demonstrate Pretoria's "humaneness" to the whole world and may also sow discord within the leadership of the liberation movement. Mandela has been in jail for a quarter-century, if he dies behind bars, this will perpetuate his

martyr's aura. And his death will remain a slur not only on the present government but on all whites as well. The consequences of such an outcome will be most regrettable.

But the incident of July 18 has shown that the influential group of Afrikaners does not possess a decisive voice. The government, as the Minister of Information has confirmed, is sticking to its former positions.

We can only guess how Nelson Mandela spent his birthday: no journalists were allowed to see him. He probably got up very early, as he does every morning. He probably did his morning exercises for two hours—throughout the twenty-five years of his imprisonment he has never missed them, except when he was in hospital. Then, just like every other morning, he probably watered the flowers and vegetables in his improvised garden on the prison roof, where a staircase leads from his cell. A meagre prison breakfast, no different from the usual one. Fresh newspapers with the "harmful" articles cut out. The latest news on the radio which, incidentally, did not mention a single word that day about the 70th birthday of the most famous prisoner in the world. Yes, Mandela must have seen the film *The Last Emperor*, sent to him as a gift by film director Bernardo Bertolucci.

It has to be mentioned here that on his birthdays Mandela may receive no more than twelve cards of congratulation. It is the prison administration and not he who does the choosing. For the rest of the time—one letter a week, which is also subject to censorship.

On the first few days alone of this anniversary year about 50,000 messages of congratulation arrived for him.

He is allowed thirty visits a year from members of his family and his lawyer. No more than two people may come to him at the same time. But Mandela cannot embrace his wife, his children or grandchildren: the visiting room is divided by thick glass and talking is done through special devices. A warder is present throughout the meeting.

It is true that the prison authorities made what they thought to be an unprecedented move—on his 70th birthday Mandela was allowed to see his wife and daughter for six whole hours instead of the usual 40 minutes.

But Nelson and Winnie Mandela declined this arrangement saying they did not want privileges denied to other jailed opponents of apartheid.

Mandela was feeling very unwell on his birthday and the day before. Yet, as we were to discover later, no doctor was sent to him. And a few days later he had to be hospitalized with tuberculosis.

In Cape Town's tough-regime Pollsmoor prison the silence was broken only by the clanging of iron doors and the shouts of the warders, while outside its compound, throughout South Africa and beyond its borders, in nearly all the countries of the world, demonstrations and rallies were being held and concerts given to commemorate the 70th birthday of that wonderful man.

At the Wembley Stadium in London more than 70,000 spectators together with famous singers and musicians from many countries sang songs in honour of the leader of the South African people. The concert was seen by tens of millions of TV viewers worldwide.

Television broadcast of the concert was banned in South Africa.

The authorities prohibited all events on the occasion of Mandela's birthday. Although the Cape Town court ruled that the ban was illegal, the police broke up all marches and spontaneous concerts devoted to Mandela's birthday.

A music festival in honour of Mandela, organized on the Cape Town University campus a few miles away from Pollsmoor, was dispersed by police with Alsatians. A police helicopter circled above the University while secret service-men filmed everybody in the cordoned-off area.

But obviously there were not enough policemen. The youth of Cape Town, Johannesburg and other cities ignored the warnings of the authorities and took to the streets with the slogans "Free Mandela!", "Free all political prisoners!"

On the great day, congregations in many churches in South Africa lit candles and prayed for Mandela's release.

In Langa township outside Cape Town—where the police shot at unarmed demonstrators in 1984 and 1985 and dozens of families lost their dear ones as a result of repressions—thousands of people packed into a church for a commemorative service. Anti-apartheid church leader Allan Boesak told the congregation: "Let them hear that we are saying that Nelson Mandela is our leader. Let them hear that we are saying that Nelson Mandela will come out of prison to lead his people."



Nelson Mandela's ideal is a democratic, free and non-racial society in which all people enjoy equal rights and live together in harmony. He hopes to live to see the realization of this ideal but, if necessary, he is prepared to die for it.

Zinzi Mandela read a message from the ANC's Acting President, Oliver Tambo, who said Mandela's imprisonment was the imprisonment of all South Africa. The message was greeted with cries of "Viva Mandela!", "We shall overcome!"

"The struggle for justice and freedom and peace in South Africa shall continue," Allan Boesak said. "It will not end until this illegitimate government is no more..."

The celebrations lasted several days throughout the country.

Several hundred people attended a party organized by anti-apartheid groups in Cape Town where they cut a cake in the shape of Pollsmoor prison with 70 candles on top.

Most of the white community went about their usual work on July 18, which was a Monday—a hard day, the first day of the new week. They heeded reports from the African townships with anxiety but were sure that the police would be able to cope as always.

Even among the whites, however, there were quite a few who backed the demands to free Mandela. And their motives were quite different from those of the *Beeld* newspaper.

"On that day we gathered with friends for supper," the wife of a well-known South African journalist told me. "But we all felt ill at ease since we could not celebrate Mandela's birthday as it deserved, could not go to him personally, could not participate in any social function in his honour. That was very sad. We lit a candle on the table and drank to his health. That is what many others did. It's the only thing we could do in the circumstances..."

Birth of a Hero



When apartheid is finally dead and buried and gets an epitaph in the form of a few lines in the encyclopedias, the 1980s will bring to mind not Pieter Botha's reforms but the image of Nelson Mandela, his boundless devotion to the

ideals of freedom and his almost holy self-sacrifice. In the torture-chambers he has not only remained the leader of his people; his influence has been growing steadily owing to some secret laws of justice that always prove righteous.

Political prisoners are as silent as the dead. Yet their silence is more eloquent than any words. Their suffering and courage, and their firm belief in victory and in the triumph of justice add to the spiritual strength of the people and show them the right path. Prison increases the attractiveness of the personality and ideas of a man convicted in an unfair trial. He becomes a hero, a martyr—and against this all power is useless.

Attempts to stifle the voice of a popular leader through imprisonment, exile and other punishments have always produced the opposite effect. At all times the people have recognized as their leaders those who value conscience and truth more than anything else.

The British threw Mahatma Gandhi behind bars in the last days of British India in an attempt to break his will, but it only increased the popularity of that great man.

People used to come from the remotest parts of Kenya to the prison where Jomo Kenyatta, the leader of the liberation struggle, was kept.

Long years of confinement enhanced the authority of Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo—from jail they continued to lead their people's struggle against racism in Rhodesia.

In almost every African country the colonialists filtered the black political leaders of the future through the prison cells.

Nelson Mandela occupies a special place among them. His sentence—life imprisonment plus five years—might seem to have blasted all hopes of freedom and to have dealt a fatal blow to the anti-apartheid movement.

In the horrible prison on Robben Island, where political prisoners were forced to quarry stone, and later on in the tough-regime Pollsmoor prison, Mandela remained a kind of shadow leader of the entire black population.

The rare visitors to his dungeon have been surprised to see that the prison administrators do not treat him like an ordinary inmate.

And so Africans are not merely chanting a slogan when they say that South Africa's leader is in Pollsmoor prison.

From there he is exerting a far greater influence on South Africa's internal political development than many think—and more than President Botha would like to think.

A great deal has been written about Nelson Mandela. His biography is known down to the minutest details. We know all his speeches. Any statement of his, smuggled out of prison, instantly gains worldwide publicity.

Yet many things about his life are unclear. Why did a chieftain's son, destined to enjoy an abundant and carefree life, prefer a life of extreme hardship? Why did he, the son of a chieftain, become one of the recognized leaders of the liberation struggle? And, finally, why has the last quarter-century seen such a fantastic growth in his prestige when he seemed to have been deprived of all contact with the people and of every possibility to act?

We repeat such questions every time we come across anything out of the "ordinary", when we see a colourful life that stands out in sharp contrast against the humdrum. We ask such questions although we can guess the answers ourselves. But we want to know the details so that we might see something similar in ourselves, so that we might compare our lives with those great ones and comprehend the causes and magnitude of the differences dividing us.

We derive strength and inspiration from such lives.

Mandela's voice has not been heard for many long years. Nevertheless, black South Africans are proud of him because during the toughest times, when the racist hysteria was at its height, he dared to hurl defiance at apartheid's machine of repression, because in the darkest period of South Africa's recent history he sowed the seeds of hope which have sprouted so luxuriantly today.

There has never been a lack of heroes in South Africa.

The whole of the country's 300-year history—at least that part of it which we know from documentary sources—abounds with famous names. Each generation has produced great personalities who have won a large following whether their cause was just or unjust. Sometimes South Africa may seem to have had more such personalities than any other country. Maybe the reason is that racial tensions have always run high in South Africa, that for ages one section of this complex organism has sought to repulse another, and that this constant mutual repulsion has created an environment conducive to the birth of heroes?

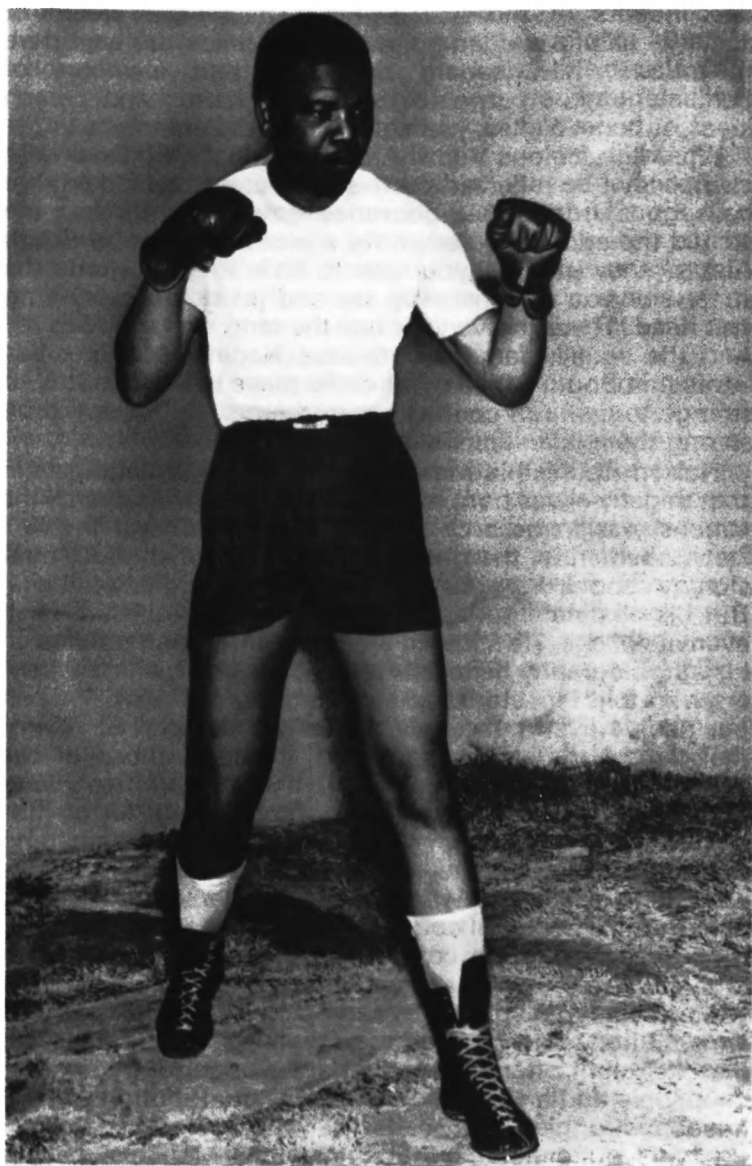
Even today many people are surprised by the fact that children from respected and influential Afrikaner families, descendants of the first Dutch settlers—the cream of society—all of a sudden go to join the Umkhonto we Sizwe guerrillas, while leading politicians and members of Parliament retire to go to the black ghettos and preach ideas of benevolence, justice and racial tolerance.

When the famous South African writer André Brink was in Moscow, he reflected on this subject and remarked that colleagues from other countries envied him. "You are spared the agonizing search for a plot if you live in South Africa," they say. "All you have to do is to go out onto the street and you will instantly see and jot down everything you need. There the very air has the tang of tragedy in it." And the equally famous authoress Nadine Gordimer believes that South Africa is "a terrific place to live in... It is so strange to live in a country where heroes still exist. To be among them is an inspiration..."

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela—one of the protagonists in that tragedy—was born in Transkei and according to all the canons was to be a chieftain. He went through the first steps obediently: the rite of initiation into manhood, missionary school, Fort Hare College, the traditional marriage. But his obstinate, independent character manifested itself even at college. He showed a burning interest in politics. In his autobiography he recalls those days and his first teachers who told him stories about the good old days. "...Then our people lived peacefully, under the democratic rule of their kings and their amapakati ['insiders', those of the highest rank next to the king], and moved freely and confidently up and down the country without let or hindrance. Then the country was ours, in our own name and right. We occupied the land, the forests, the rivers; we extracted the mineral wealth beneath the soil and all the riches of this beautiful country. We set up and operated our own government, we controlled our own armies and we organized our own trade and commerce." But then the whites came and split the world apart. The people took up arms. "I hoped and vowed then that, among the treasures that life might offer me, would be the opportunity to serve my people and make my own humble contribution to their freedom struggles."

It was quite natural that the young Mandela, having

been brought up in the traditions of the fighting people, should devote his life to the cause of liberation.



Mandela was unable to graduate from Fort Hare College. (This, incidentally, is a notable educational establishment. It was attended by many future African political leaders who came to power after their countries gained independence.) He organized a demonstration against racial discrimination with a fellow student named Oliver Tambo—the future President of the African National Congress (ANC). Both were expelled from college.

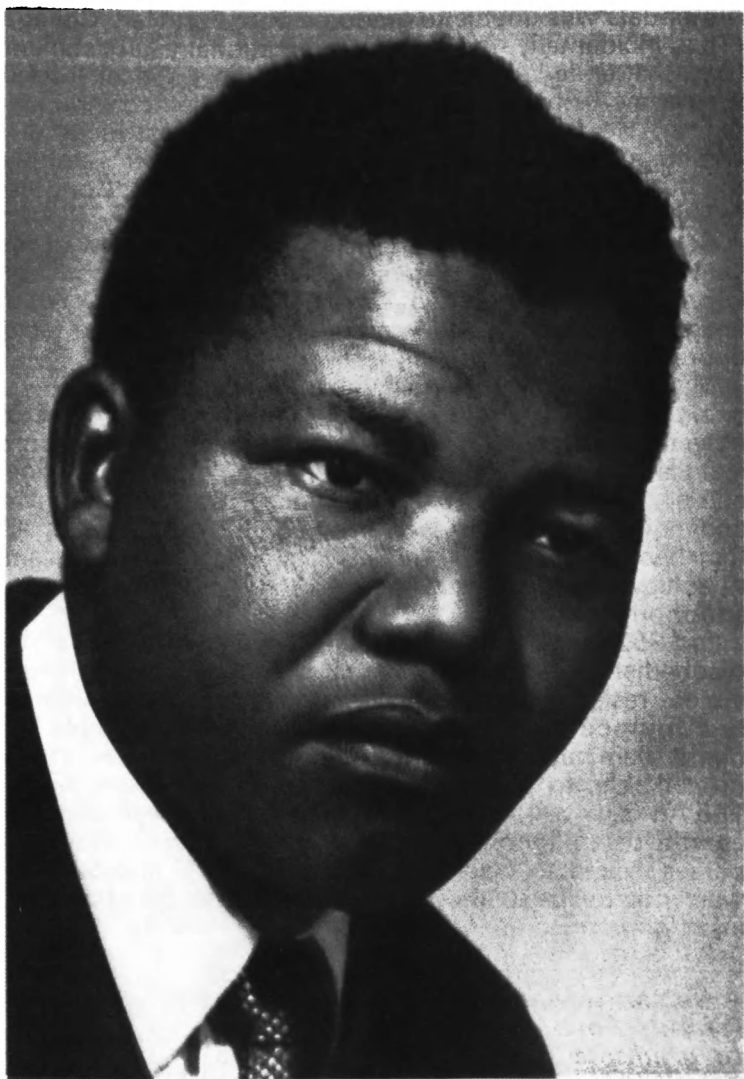
Soon after that Nelson entered the Faculty of Law at the University of the Witwatersrand. In 1944 together with Oliver Tambo he founded—and headed—the ANC Youth League, which initiated mass protests against racial oppression.

Mandela seemed to rush into political struggles quite unexpectedly. Quick-witted, self-confident, intolerant of objections and always full of original ideas, this stubborn giant seemed to some people to be the chieftain's spoilt and shallow son who would sooner or later steady down and come to his senses. But even at that time he astonished everybody with his earnest and passionate desire to achieve the goal for whose sake he had chosen a hard and thorny path.

In 1952 the ANC called on the Africans to launch a civil disobedience campaign. That was the last phase of non-violent resistance to racial discrimination, the last attempt to **convince** the white minority. The idea was simple and might seem naive on the face of it: it was to make apartheid unworkable, to paralyze the system at the "lower level". The Africans were to defiantly violate minor restrictions of apartheid—to ignore "For whites only" signs, burn the passes issued to blacks only, and so on. If arrested they were not to resist; they were to refuse to pay fines and insist on imprisonment instead.

Nelson Mandela attended the famous Fort Hare College but failed to graduate from it because he was expelled for participating in a protest demonstration against racial discrimination.

◀ ***As a student, Mandela was fond of sport.***



In 1944 Mandela, along with his comrades, founded and headed the militant Youth League of the African National Congress.

The disobedience campaign shocked the white minority government. The Afrikaners argued that once apartheid was being violated in the parks, it could be destroyed altogether. They demanded severe measures from the government, which was quick to respond with a new law stipulating a fine of 300 pounds sterling, up to three years' imprisonment and ten lashes. The presumption of innocence was discarded—an alleged offender had to prove that his action did not constitute a protest against the system.

The campaign was suppressed but it succeeded in demonstrating to the whole world the true face of apartheid.

"Normally revolutions are not made by people standing in an orderly queue outside the wrong railway booking office. But in South African terms nothing could be more revolutionary. Apartheid, that 'traditional way of life', absolutely depended on the willingness of people to stand in the right queues, at all times, in every conceivable human circumstance between birth and death," wrote the British journalist Douglas Brown, who had spent many years in South Africa.

Mandela stood "in the wrong queue" in defiance of the "new order", and had to suffer due punishment. It was not only friends who were attracted by the extraordinary qualities of the young leader. From the outset the authorities were aware of a formidable adversary and did their utmost to coerce him into silence.

In 1952 he was given a suspended sentence of nine months' imprisonment for organizing the disobedience campaign. In the same year this sentence was supplemented with a deprivation of rights confining his movements to Johannesburg. In September 1953 the ruling on deprivation of rights was extended for another two years. Curiously, already at that time Mandela was ordered to leave the African National Congress and stop his political activities. He recalls those days in his notes: **"I found myself restricted and isolated from my fellowmen, trailed by officers of the Special Branch wherever I went ... I was made, by the law, a criminal, not because of what I had done, but because of what I stood for."** Mandela was "under a ban" for a total of nine years.

The short period of the relatively free life in





In 1958 Nelson and Winnie got married. They had two daughters. The family lived in Orlando, Soweto ... and everywhere it was under constant police surveillance.

Johannesburg, where he opened a lawyers' office with Oliver Tambo, helped Nelson to see even more clearly the inherent gross injustice of the apartheid system. Those who



In 1960 the South African police shot at a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville, killing 69 Africans and wounding 176. A wave of protest swept the whole country. The government banned the ANC, declared martial law and arrested 20,000 people, including Nelson Mandela.

A demonstration in defence of the arrested ANC leaders.

came to them for help and advice were peasants driven away from the land of their ancestors, jobless people forced out of the cities, whole families who could not live together because one of the spouses lacked a permit to live in town—hundreds upon hundreds of unfortunate people whom apartheid had turned into criminals. "...The whole life of any thinking African in this country drives him continuously to a conflict between his conscience on the one hand and the law on the other ... a law, which, in our

view, is immoral, unjust and intolerable... We must protest against it, we must oppose it, we must attempt to alter it," Mandela appealed in those years.

The year 1960 went down in history as more than just the Year of Africa. While in the majority of countries the Africans liberated themselves from colonial domination, more and more discriminatory laws were introduced in South Africa. Repressions grew more and more severe. A peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville (June 1960), where the police used firearms against the protesters, culminated in violence: 69 people were killed and 176 wounded.

Immediately after the demonstration the authorities declared a state of emergency. The African National Congress was banned. Any resistance to the policy of apartheid was declared illegal. Police raids and arrests went on for weeks, the correspondent of the London newspaper *The Observer* reported on the situation in the African settlements. At night helicopters hovered over the Africans' homes, flooding the place with powerful searchlights.

By that time the ANC had behind it nearly 40 years' experience in non-violent resistance, which had grown out of the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. But non-violent methods of struggle were no longer capable of curbing



apartheid. One of the ANC leaders, Chief Albert Lutuli, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, expressed profound disappointment in the results of the former tactics. He wrote: "Who will deny that thirty years of my life have been spent knocking in vain, patiently, moderately, and modestly at a closed and barred door? What have been the fruits of moderation? The past thirty years have seen the greatest number of laws restricting our rights and progress, until today we have reached a stage where we have almost no rights at all."

In an interview granted to two London journalists on May 30, 1961, Mandela warned: "In my mind we are closing a chapter on this question of a non-violent policy."

Six months later, South African newspapers carried front-page reports about frightening attacks on government buildings and economic projects. Responsibility for the attacks was claimed by a hitherto unknown organization called Umkhonto we Sizwe, which in Zulu means "Spear of the Nation". Its fighters were led by Nelson Mandela.

Pretoria did not yet realize that the shooting of protesters in Sharpeville had been the starting volley which had already shifted the still insecure apartheid machine and was bringing it down irrepressibly, though so far unnoticeably to even the most vigilant.

In 1961 there was a new wave of arrests in the country. Mandela went underground to continue the struggle. The ANC abandoned its tactics of non-violent resistance and Mandela took command of the combat detachments of Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation).

In 1962 Mandela secretly left South Africa and visited different countries in Africa and Europe. He spoke on the ANC's behalf at the Pan-African Freedom Conference in Addis Ababa. Mandela met British political figures in London. In Algeria he underwent military training.



In London, 1962.



*With Oliver Tambo, Addis Ababa,
1962.*



At a military camp in Algeria.



They launched a hunt for Mandela. For two years he managed to avoid the police. (Winnie, his wife, remembers that he made himself up like a professional actor and that sometimes even she was taken in by it.) During that period he went abroad illegally and toured several African and



A demonstration in support of Nelson Mandela during his trial.

European countries, trying to persuade their leaders to grant the freedom fighters political and financial support.

The West was unresponsive.

On August 5, 1962, Mandela fell into a police trap. According to available data, the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States had put the South African police on his trail (this was disclosed in 1986 by, among others, the American newspaper *The International Herald Tribune*).

On that fatal day Mandela was driving a car in Natal Province, disguised as a white man's chauffeur. His route was known to a CIA agent working in the US Consulate in Durban. By agreement with Washington he tipped off the South African police, having demanded in exchange information about plans for the future arrangement of the Bantustans. The authorities jumped at this offer since they had no intention of keeping these plans secret.

It has to be added that just at that time close cooperation was being established between the CIA and the South African secret police. Subsequently the CIA helped a great deal in organizing the infamous BOSS—South Africa's

Bureau of State Security which is responsible for hundreds of provocations against participants in the anti-apartheid movement both inside South Africa and in other countries.

Mandela was sentenced to five years' hard labour.

In July 1963 the police seized almost all the leaders of the ANC in Rivonia, near Johannesburg. The documents they found were enough to take Mandela to court once again, this time as Accused Number 1.

While waiting for the verdict (many were sure it would be the death penalty), Mandela wrote his final law degree papers for the London University where he was taking a correspondence course. The other defendants were calm, too, one of Mandela's comrades recalls. The only thing they discussed was how they should behave in court if the death sentence was passed. Mandela decided he would say something like this: **"If you think that by sentencing me to death you will destroy the liberation movement, you are wrong: I am prepared to die and know my death will be an inspiration to my people in their struggle."**

The apartheid court showed "mercy" by sentencing all the eight defendants (Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Ahmed Kathrada, Elias Motsoaledi, Andrew Mlangeni and Denis Goldberg) to life imprisonment.

Through Robben Island and Pollsmoor Prison



The fact that even the prison authorities treat Mandela with undisguised respect speaks above all of major changes in the thinking of white South Africans. But these changes are a relatively new phenomenon to which the South Africans themselves have not yet become accustomed.

Mandela and his comrades spent most of their twenty-five years behind bars in extremely severe conditions; they were constantly subjected to vicious mockery.

It must be borne in mind that Mandela spent 18 years on Robben Island, where one of the gloomiest prisons in the



present-day world is located. Surrounded by the cold waters of the Atlantic Ocean, the island is clearly visible from Cape Town's seaside resorts.

Robben Island was first turned into a prison in the mid-17th century, when the first Dutch settlers began to send convicts there to quarry stone and to collect shells on the beach for the production of lime.

In the 18th century it was converted into a colony for lepers and madmen.

During World War II the island became a military base. In 1961 a prison was built there once again.

The five kilometres separating the island from the mainland, plus the watch towers, the double fencing, the fierce Alsatians and the radio observation of the sea virtually rule out any possibility of escape.

Over the last hundred years there has been only one successful escape, made in 1984. A criminal serving his term on the island stole a boat from the warder and overcame all the barriers.

Those who have survived to tell the tale say that on Robben Island the warders terrorize the prisoners with daily beatings, tortures and punishment cells. Michael Dingake, an ANC member who served a 15-year prison sentence on Robben Island, recalls how horribly SWAPO leader Toivo ja Toivo and other liberation movement leaders were beaten up and then forced to clean their blood-splattered cells. Mandela's fame saved him from



***Robben Island prison where
Mandela spent 18 years.***

beatings, but the psychological pressure on him was great. "In my first ten years on Robben Island," he recalls, "conditions were really very bad... We had to work every day in the lime quarry from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. ... It was hard, boring, unproductive work... The guards pushed us all the time to work harder, ... and we could get solitary confinement if they thought we were slacking." Helen Suzman, one of the most staunch campaigners for the black man's rights in the South African Parliament, visited Robben Island in the late 1960s. "Guards with Alsatian dogs on leads, and sometimes with swastikas tattooed on their wrists, would drive the men to work," she says. "I remember one prisoner complaining to me that he had been assaulted."

From the mid-1970s the situation on Robben Island improved somewhat. The prisoners were no longer beaten and were given more books and periodicals. Pretoria seemed to have responded to the wrath of the world community, which had come to know about the monstrous



***Nelson Mandela in the courtyard of
Robben Island prison, 1966.***

conditions in which Robben Island prisoners were being kept. Moreover, the upsurge of the national liberation movement in southern Africa forced Pretoria to change its attitude towards imprisoned leaders of the anti-apartheid movement.

In 1982 Mandela was unexpectedly transferred to the mainland, to the tough-regime Pollsmoor prison outside Cape Town. According to Mandela's comrades, the government was worried about his influence on other prisoners. Sandi Sijake, released in July 1988 after 15 years on Robben Island, says it was impossible not to respect and admire Mandela because of his style of leadership. "Even if you disagree with him," he recounts, "he is a person who always makes time to sit down with you to discuss the various issues."

Nelson Mandela managed to create a veritable university in jail. Young people with an incomplete secondary education came out of prison with diplomas from higher educational establishments, which he had helped them to gain through correspondence courses.

But the main reason for Mandela's transfer to Pollsmoor was that it had become politically inexpedient to keep him on the island: his popularity had been growing rapidly and at the same time the international campaign for his release had been intensifying.

Pollsmoor prison was built in the 1970s some 15 kilometres away from Cape Town. It consists of a dozen or so yellow-brick buildings of the same type surrounded by a low concrete wall. The majority of the 3,000 prisoners are criminals who are kept in separate sections in accordance with their skin colour. Representatives of the prison service boast that Pollsmoor has the latest equipment safeguarding against escapes. In the hospital building there is a separate cell where Mandela (identified by the number 466/64 on the prison lists) lives together with six of his comrades.

Mandela's cell is roomy—25 × 40 feet, with an exit to the roof of the building. The barred windows are too high for one to admire the splendid hills around the prison, but they let in sunlight. This is the description given by US Senator Samuel Dash, who managed to interview Mandela in January 1985.

This rare opportunity was granted to him by the South African Minister of Justice with the consent of the Cabinet

of Ministers and President Botha. Pretoria must have hoped that by meeting the request of the Senator, a well-known expert on criminal law, it could somewhat improve its image in the eyes of the US Congress. Senator Samuel Dash received permission to see Mandela only a few days after a similar request from Senator Edward Kennedy, who was in South Africa at the time, was turned down.

Kennedy was considered too much of a "leftist" to be allowed to visit Mandela.

Samuel Dash remembers Mandela as being a tall, well-proportioned, likable person who seemed far younger than his years. He looked energetic and healthy. His calm and confident manner, and the dignity detectable in him seemed incongruous in that prison. As a matter of fact, the Senator recalled that during the meeting he had the feeling that he was in the presence not of a rebellious combatant or a radical ideologist, but of a Head of State.

Evidently the aura of glory and martyrdom surrounding Mandela's name has an effect on the prison authorities, too. I shall again refer to Senator Dash as a rare witness who said that the major, who was present throughout the two-and-a-half-hour interview, and the several guards and officials who accompanied him took as something due Mandela's polite but firm instructions, as if he were their chief. They opened the gates and doors by Mandela's order when he was showing Samuel Dash around the prison building.

It is not that Mandela is completely isolated from the outside world. He may listen to South African radio and receive several South African newspapers, the London *Guardian* and the American *Time* weekly. He has been allowed to collect a small library in his cell. All this enables him to keep up with world events. His rare visitors have observed that he is well up in current affairs and competent in his judgement of the key problems of international affairs.

Talking in 1985 to a member of Britain's House of Lords, Lord Nicholas W. Bethell, Mandela asked his opinion about the impact of Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to Britain on East-West relations, and about the outcome of the negotiations between the US State Secretary and the Soviet Foreign Minister; he also asked what was Mrs. Thatcher's secret of success.

Naturally Mandela knows what is happening in South Africa. He presumably gets information from sources other than those permitted by the prison administration. At any rate those who have managed to speak with him are greatly impressed by his accurate and in-depth analysis of the situation, his subtle conclusions and well-founded predictions.

Lord Bethell came out of Pollsmoor with the conviction that Mandela is the very leader capable of winning freedom for his people and initiating talks with the white minority government.

By allowing Lord Bethell and other high-ranking visitors to see Mandela, Pretoria probably hoped to hear at least some words justifying the criminal violation of the rights of Mandela and his fellow prisoners. But none of those who have crossed the threshold of Mandela's cell have been able to express anything except indignation towards the South African authorities.

"The problem is ... not one of brutal prison conditions," Lord Bethell said. "It is that Mandela and his friends are in prison at all. Mandela and other top ANC officials have spent eighteen years on Robben Island and three in Pollsmoor—all for no worse a crime than conniving at the destruction of property. It is a punishment that far exceeds the offence, even if one ignores the argument that they had every right to use force against apartheid, deprived as they were of the right to vote, to stand for election or to reside where they wish in their own country. They are in prison now, it is clear, not as an act of justice or punishment, but because it does not politically suit the South African state to release them."

The same conclusion was drawn by the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group on Southern Africa, which visited Mandela in 1986:

"In his manner he exuded authority and received the respect of all around him, including his gaolers. ...

"His authority clearly extends throughout the nationalist movement, although he constantly reiterated that he could not speak for his colleagues in the ANC ... and that his views could carry weight only when expressed collectively through the ANC.

"In our discussions Nelson Mandela also took care to emphasize his desire for reconciliation across the divide of

colour. He described himself as a deeply committed South African nationalist but added that South African nationalists came in more than one colour—there were white people, coloured people and Indian people who were also deeply committed South African nationalists.”

“Mr. Mandela, according to all the evidence, is a unifying, commanding and popular leader,” the Group stated in its Commonwealth Report. “Recent opinion polls, as well as our personal observations, revealed that blacks, Indians and coloureds look overwhelmingly to Nelson Mandela as the leader of a non-racial South Africa.”

Having put Mandela in jail, the authorities found themselves in an extremely awkward and complicated situation. The international community and practically all nations, including South Africa’s major trade partners, demanded his release. On the one hand, to ignore these demands would mean to make the already poor reputation of their country in the world even worse. On the other hand, to repeal his sentence and release him would at the very least mean to admit a legal error, while in the long run this would amount to recognizing the illegitimacy of the entire system. Such a decision, the diehard defenders of apartheid contended, would have a demoralizing effect on the white community, and could boost the activity of the Right extremists. Mandela’s jailers had one more thing to take into account: he was not young, and if something happened to the extremely popular leader while he was in prison, all the blame would naturally fall on the government. And considering the extent of Mandela’s popularity, one can imagine the possible consequences. Pretoria must have often remembered the famous expression of the Danish philosopher Søren Aabye Kierkegaard: When a tyrant dies, his power ends; when a martyr dies, his power begins.

At any rate, as early as 1969 Mandela was offered the first deal: he would be released provided he publicly renounced “violence” as a means of political struggle and settled in the Transkei Bantustan (i.e. beyond the borders of “white” South Africa). He was even promised a post in the “government” of Transkei.

Mandela’s comrade in struggle and in jail, “Mac” Maharaj, who served twelve years on Robben Island, recalled that Mandela was emphatic in rejecting such



Ever since Nelson Mandela was sentenced to life imprisonment, his wife Winnie Mandela, Vice-President of the Black Women's Federation, has been subjected to constant persecutions and arrests, intimidations and threats.

deals. He said he would rather remain in jail than become a traitor.

All the offers made to Mandela were similar in substance. One got the impression that apartheid's bureaucratic machine had been programmed for one variant only, so that in case of refusal it churned it out again and again. After another offer in 1985, Mandela sent out a letter calling on the Africans to continue the struggle and not to give in to Pretoria's propaganda, which claimed that he would accept President Botha's condition any minute now.

Here are a few lines from that letter, which was read out by Mandela's daughter Zinzi on February 10, 1985 to a mass meeting in Jabulani Stadium, Soweto:

"I am surprised at the conditions that the government wants to impose on me. I am not a violent man. ...

"It was only then, when all other forms of resistance were no longer open to us, that we turned to armed struggle. Let Botha show that he is different to Malan, Strijdom and Verwoerd. Let him renounce violence. Let him say that he will dismantle apartheid. Let him unban the people's organization, the African National Congress. Let him free all who have been imprisoned, banished or exiled for their opposition to apartheid. Let him guarantee free political activity so that people may decide who will govern them.

"I cherish my own freedom dearly, but I care even more for your freedom. ...

"Your freedom and mine cannot be separated. I will return."

While demanding that the ANC renounce violent methods of struggle, the South African government is unwilling to admit that the main source and chief cause of that violence is apartheid. Nelson Mandela's resolute answer to the insulting condition for his release was supported by all those who seek the abolition of apartheid. "We consider such a condition irrational," said ANC President Oliver Tambo. "Apartheid constitutes an act of violence against its own people, and if we were to declare a moratorium on the struggle while apartheid continued, it would mean that we were acting unilaterally."

Every time an offer of release was made to Mandela, a

rumour quickly went round the black areas that he had been persuaded to accept. Refuting such lies, Winnie Mandela told the inhabitants of a settlement in Orange Free State (she had lived there for nine years without leaving by order of the authorities): Pretoria will not release your leaders. We had to traverse a long road to arrive at this phase of our struggle, when even life itself is not the price for freedom. Freedom costs more...

For President Botha (and many others in the ruling elite) Nelson Mandela is not a courageous freedom fighter, not the spiritual leader of many millions of people, not even a political rival. He is one of those rebellious slaves who causes too much trouble by being irrationally stubborn and rejecting good offers of freedom. Botha doesn't seem to be thinking of having a talk with Mandela, even out of sheer curiosity—after all his captive is one of the most famous men in the whole world.

Joseph Lelyveld, a well-known American journalist and expert on South African politics, doesn't believe Botha would make such a move. Not only because Mandela's skin is black. We know that Botha has willingly sat at the same table with foreign African leaders. What is important for Botha in this issue, Lelyveld suggests, is geography rather than ideology. Had Mandela been born in another country, such a meeting might have been possible; Botha would have gone to see him in his cell or maybe have had him brought to him. But Mandela virtually places himself on the same footing as he, Botha, so he is a puppet of enemy forces sent from abroad, and of course in that capacity he cannot be of any interest to the President.

Botha and his Cabinet are making a tragic mistake by refusing to recognize Nelson Mandela not only as a possible claimant to the post of chief executive in a non-racial South Africa, but also as an equal partner in the inevitable talks between the white minority and the black majority. The unwillingness of Botha and his supporters to overcome their "white tribalism" could cost South Africa dear.

Announcing another extension of the state of emergency in June 1987, President Botha came up with a new excuse for refusing to release Mandela. He put the blame on the ANC leaders who, he alleged, were living in luxury in other countries and not allowing the former and now elderly

leaders to accept the government's "generous conditions".

What can one say to that? Botha's advisers had obviously given him a losing argument which betrayed the regime's fear of the possible consequences of the continued imprisonment of Mandela and his comrades. Each new day in prison diminishes the chance of a peaceful outcome of the crisis. Each new refusal or condition presented by Botha adds fuel to the fire of the liberation struggle.

In the same speech the South African President once again rejected the possibility of talks with the ANC. This time he assumed the hypocritical image of a "fighter against terrorism": "We are not going to talk with these people. We are going to fight them for the simple reason that they represent the very terrorism that is harassing today's world."

And again we are reminded of Nelson Mandela's response to the authorities' offer to give up political activity in exchange for a review of his term of imprisonment: **"Let Botha show that he is different... Let him renounce violence. Let him say that he will dismantle apartheid..."**

Incidentally, in August 1987 Pretoria reportedly withdrew its demand that Mandela should "reject violence" as a condition for his release. There were various reactions to this news. To be sure, a reasonable approach to one of the key problems of present-day South Africa is welcome. For one can only shrug in despair when the head of one of the world's most repressive regimes accuses of violence the leader of an organization that demands justice for all people, irrespective of the colour of their skin. So, better late than never. But, on the other hand, Pretoria's move looked like an attempt to earn indulgence, to shun responsibility for the lawlessness and tyranny reigning in South Africa, to pacify the anger of the people.

Judging by the comments in the press, this new step, far from showing the government's desire to hold talks with the true representatives of the majority, proved to be a fresh attempt to split the liberation movement. *Washington Times* wrote in August 1987 that by releasing Mandela Pretoria intended to remove a major obstacle in the way of setting up a "National Council" for discussing the issue of the division of power, which moderate political leaders of



Although Nelson Mandela has been in prison for more than a quarter of a century, he remains a living symbol of the anti-apartheid struggle.

the Africans had allegedly promised to enter if Mandela were freed. If the ANC were to boycott these talks to show its unwillingness to work for the abolition of the racist order in South Africa by peaceful methods, the newspaper stressed, it would antagonize black South Africans, who now sympathized, if not with its tactics, then with its aims;

and thus would evoke hostility from leaders of the coloured and Asian communities.

A split in the anti-apartheid movement would play into the hands of Pretoria, which was hell-bent on undermining the ANC's positions inside the country and discrediting it in the eyes of the international community.

A Symbol of Unity



We have a fairly good idea of what black South Africans think and say about Nelson Mandela. His authority is truly immense, especially among the urban youth. It would be an exaggeration, however, to say that he has the unqualified support of all black South Africans.

In Kwazulu bantustan, for example, which is inhabited by South Africa's largest ethnic group, the Zulus (6.4 million), the majority recognize as their leader the chieftain of the Zulus and Chief Minister of that bantustan, Mangosuthu Buthelezi. Others prefer the priest Allan Boesak or Nobel Prizewinner Archbishop Desmond Tutu. There are some who are quite happy with the rulers of the pseudo-independent bantustans. According to public opinion polls, which are conducted quite often among urban blacks, other political leaders, including even Pieter Botha, are favoured for the post of President.

The March 1988 opinion poll in Soweto showed that 37 per cent had more confidence in Archbishop Desmond Tutu, 22 per cent in Nelson Mandela and nine per cent in Mangosuthu Buthelezi. The overwhelming majority recognized the African National Congress as the leading political organization.

But for all the sympathies and antipathies, Mandela's figure towers above all. There is hardly an inhabitant of any black township or bantustan who does not respect Mandela for his courage and staunchness in the struggle for justice. In other words, Mandela has become the unifying force and banner of the countrywide struggle of black South Africans. It must be said that the leaders of individual black groups and organizations recognize

Mandela's supreme role. Mangosuthu Buthelezi, for one, says that no reform will win the confidence of the Africans as long as Mandela is behind bars. He says he is willing to work along Mandela's lines for the sake of building a new South Africa.

Yet it has to be borne in mind that relations between Buthelezi and the Inkatha Zulu Political and Cultural Organization he heads, on the one hand, and the African National Congress, the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), on the other, are so tense that they often end up in violent clashes.

It would be a mistake to turn a blind eye to the serious ethnic conflicts within the black majority which continue to nurture major disputes between the various black political groups. Although so far the common aim to dismantle apartheid has helped to contain these conflicts, in a number of cases they have burst into fierce clashes, often leading to numerous casualties. African nationalism has a long way to go before becoming veritably African or, preferably, South African nationalism, and succeeding in fusing the nationalism of the Zulus, Xhosas, Tswanas and other nationalities into a single mainstream. Mandela's release and his inclusion in the process of South Africa's transition to a non-racial democratic society could help greatly towards that end.

Many people consider Mandela to be the very political figure who is capable, by virtue of his authority, of reducing the tensions between separate contingents of the liberation movement in South Africa, cementing the breaches between them and inducing their leaders to overcome their differences peacefully.

Some of these differences led to clashes, as was the case in Pietermaritzburg. They were protracted and generated assertions that a civil war had already broken out between black South Africans, and that the clashes were bound to become nationwide in the event of the black majority coming to power.

In a number of cases disturbances were provoked by the police or criminal elements taking advantage of the confusion.

The fanaticism of the inhabitants of the townships and their refusal to compromise mean that any deviation by any

of the Africans from the current general line is considered a betrayal, and for this he is subjected to brutal cruelty. Those who cooperate with the authorities or simply do not wish to take an active part in the struggle are classified as "sell-outs".

One cannot feel anything but revulsion for the lynching which ends up with the victim being burnt alive. The execution, called "necklace-killing", is performed as follows: the convicted person is tied by his hands and feet, often after ruthless beatings, then fastened to a pole or a tree; a car tyre drenched in petrol is put round his neck and set on fire. The blood-intoxicated mob often dances round the live torch. Incidentally, sometimes this was done in the name of the ANC. "Necklace-killing" has lately been replaced by a punishment inherited from the Chinese "cultural revolution" of the Mao days, called the "modeller". The accused is led naked along the street and has to scream out his sins on meeting any passerby.

A quarter of a century ago Nelson Mandela warned that **"unless responsible leadership was given to canalize and control the feelings of our people, there would be outbreaks of terrorism which would produce an intensity of bitterness and hostility between the various races of this country which is not produced even by war."**

If only the African chieftains had heeded his words at the time.

But in 1964, at the infamous Rivonia Trial with a group of ANC leaders in the dock, the prophetic words of Mandela and his comrades failed to pierce through the deaf and hostile wall of racist hatred. Mandela was allowed to speak but his fate had already been decided. At that time, first Dr. Verwoerd held the whole country by the throat, and then Balthazar Johannes Vorster gave black South Africans nightmares. The opposition was dumb. Probably the only "non-parliamentary" supporter of anti-apartheid who was really immune against arrest was the writer Alan Paton, who was too famous to be touched. Many active opponents of the regime and freedom fighters were forced to go underground and then flee the country. Nelson Mandela and his comrades were sent to prison on the dreadful Robben Island.

And there seemed to be no end to this gloom of racist terror.

It was in that grim situation that the man with a death sentence hanging over him dared to declare that the time would come when South Africa would be "a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

By the way, it would be well for all members of the South African government, and especially for President Botha, to study in detail the proceedings of the Rivonia Trial. Though, probably, the President's aides do sometimes take a glance at Mandela's speeches to fish out various ideas to be fitted into the Procrustean bed of apartheid's "reform". Sometimes one feels like accusing Pretoria of political plagiarism.

Take, for example, President Botha's proposal to create a National Council where representatives of all groups of the population would discuss the burning issues of the country. In fact, way back in 1961 Mandela spelled out the idea of calling a National Convention that "would discuss our national problems in a sane and sober manner, and would work out solutions which sought to preserve and safeguard the interests of all sections of the population." Such a convention would "draw up a new, non-racial and democratic Constitution."

If we take the verbatim report of Mandela's trials and examine his speeches carefully, we can easily see, from the position of the last decade of the 20th century, that his words have passed the test of time and are no less relevant today.

In many ways Mandela had a better understanding than his countrymen of the developing situation.

From Crisis to Crisis



One must not assess the current situation in South Africa from only one angle. It is multidimensional and contradictory. Within it one can see the shoots of the future

laboriously forcing their way through the tough and deep-seated roots of a past that is living out its last days. There is still a lot of cruelty, irreconcilability, senselessness and blood; but at the same time there are rich reserves of goodwill, mercy and talent. It abounds with racism and ethnic chauvinism; yet powerful trends are being revived towards a common, national, non-racial course.

South Africa is still at the stage when it is a question of "who governs" or "who will govern", and not "how to govern". There is an enormous distance between these two seemingly similar questions. Many years may pass before the country arrives at the "how to govern" stage.

The white minority, whatever its political hue, has an unequivocal answer to the issue: the whites must stay in power even if the blacks are granted political rights. The differences between the Right and the ultra-Right are of a purely semantic nature. Both want to retain racial discrimination, or apartheid, at the decision-making level in the major areas of life.

The black majority, likewise, is absolutely clear on this issue: their uncompromising principle of "one man, one vote" is bound to turn the tide. Differences between black political organizations over the question of "who will govern" are practically negligible.

Perhaps South Africa is not ready as yet to reach a reasonable compromise that would pave the way to justice. Such solutions take time to mature.

The present situation cannot continue indefinitely. Resolute actions are needed. All participants in the South African drama are aware of this.

The whole point is who will make the first move and in what direction the tide will turn.

The profound crisis that has hit South Africa's white ruling technocrats in all spheres is accompanied by the painful awareness that the system they represent has actually become a heavy burden shackling both blacks and whites.

Neither black nor white is free; both are equally constrained. Pain in the one is immediately echoed in the other. In such a situation no progress is possible.

It is this common fate, this interdependence of blacks and whites that Mandela spoke about in his day. At his trial he recalled that in 1961, when white South Africa was

holding a referendum over the forthcoming proclamation of a republic, the leaders of the black majority proposed "bringing into being a democratic republic where all South Africans will enjoy human rights without the slightest discrimination; where African and non-African would be able to live together in peace, sharing a common nationality and a common loyalty to this country, which is our homeland." The Pretoria government didn't even deem it necessary to reply to this appeal. Or rather, it responded with massacres and mass arrests.

Way back in 1961 Pretoria would raise its eyebrows in surprise when the black man's voice sounded louder than usual, and it was sure of its undivided rule. The Sharpeville crisis of June 1960 had not yet scared the white minority government, which was swift and ruthless in suppressing disturbances.

Even then Mandela warned that the arrogant unwillingness of the whites to heed the demands of the Africans would only lead to new and more vigorous actions by the oppressed. At his first trial in 1962 he told his judges: **"Government violence can do only one thing, and that is to breed counter-violence. We have warned repeatedly that the government, by resorting continually to violence, will breed in this country counter-violence amongst the people, till ultimately, if there is no dawning of sanity on the part of the government—ultimately, the dispute between the government and my people will finish up by being settled in violence and by force."** Furthermore: **"In its efforts to keep the African people in a position of perpetual subordination, South Africa must and will fail."**

Mandela's prediction proved correct.

After the Sharpeville massacre came a period of relative stability, with Pretoria fully controlling the situation. The opposition was crushed. It took it long years to adapt itself to the new political conditions, to accumulate strength and make another attempt at mobilizing the people into action against apartheid.

The Soweto events took place 16 years after Sharpeville. In Soweto the student disturbances lasted a whole month and not just a few days, and their intensity was incomparably greater. Several cities were swept by antigovern-

ment actions. But even then the authorities won a fairly easy victory—about a thousand people were shot down by the police.

And once again the opposition went underground to heal its wounds and gain strength. But this time it recovered twice as quickly. Already in 1982 there broke out fresh disturbances which lasted several years with varying degrees of intensity and involving large numbers of people. A conservative estimate put the casualty toll at over 3,000 dead; nearly 30,000 were arrested.

The authorities managed to suppress the revolutionary outbreak by means of total terror; this time it took them years and not months of repressions to do so. The system was dealt a powerful blow, for which it had obviously not been prepared.

As Mandela presumed—and he openly warned about this—tensions are constantly on the upsurge. The peaks of the crises are rising higher and higher, growing in geometrical progression, with their declines becoming ever shorter in time and shallower in depth. Pretoria has failed to wipe out the crisis of the 1980s; it has managed only to damp it down, to drive the movement underground but it has not destroyed its mechanism.

"I don't doubt that the next crisis will come even more quickly," the well-known South African journalist Allister Sparks told me. "It will be even more dangerous. Before the downfall of the Portuguese colonial empire in Africa in the mid-1970s, Pretoria never thought that it would have to repeal its apartheid laws in the foreseeable future, even partially. The achievement of independence by Angola and Mozambique gave a powerful stimulus to the struggle of black South Africans. It showed that there was a limit to Pretoria's manoeuvring. The Soweto uprising was a signal of the changes that have started taking place in the tactics of the liberation struggle and a forerunner of future battles. Now, after a series of outbreaks, each of which was stronger than the last, the government is being compelled to make more and more concessions. But nowadays these concessions are not enough; radical changes are needed."

In one of his rare prison interviews, Mandela said that although he did not rule out the possibility of a peaceful transition to democracy in South Africa, the hope for this was becoming fainter every year. "If the leaders of the

whites don't have kind feelings towards us, if they don't want to hold talks with us on the problem of political unity, if in effect they tell us that we must remain in the condition of the oppressed, then we really have no alternative to a violent struggle. And I assure you that in this struggle we shall come out victorious."

I remembered this pronouncement by Mandela while talking to Allister Sparks.

"I see South Africa's tomorrow as a chain of crises, each of which is stronger and longer than the preceding one," Allister Sparks said. "The white leaders will not agree to negotiations until the country actually finds itself on the brink of destruction. So far they are not willing—all their actions show that under the present circumstances any talk about negotiations is premature. The very idea of negotiations can be discredited. The idea must mature in the minds of the Afrikaners. But this process of 'maturing' can be speeded up by properly combining internal and external pressure."

It was the liberation movement's pressure, accelerated to a great extent by Nelson Mandela, that compelled the South African government to embark on a reform of the apartheid system. This reform brings to mind the prophetic words Mandela pronounced in the early 1960s, when the majority believed any idea of change was just a pipe dream. Through the dense cloud of apartheid he foresaw the time when this idea would become a reality.

Why Pieter Botha Fails



One of the favourite expressions of South African President Pieter W. Botha is: "Actions speak louder than words." One cannot help agreeing with him, for the words and deeds of the National Party, which has been in office since 1948 and is headed by him, have never been so far apart as in the 1980s.

It was during these years that apartheid's foundations

began to crack and crumble, though this was invisible to the South African Philistine.

The summer 1976 uprising in Soweto, which ended with the shooting down of hundreds of Africans, was a prologue to the popular actions that swept almost the whole country, becoming particularly intense from 1984 to 1987. A new political situation developed in southern Africa due to the downfall of Portuguese colonialism and the formation around the Republic of South Africa of a belt of independent African states which immediately joined the struggle against the apartheid regime.

The crisis of the apartheid policy was also manifested by the changed alignment of political forces inside the ruling class and the new social stratification of white society, characterized by the disintegration of the former Afrikaner unity. The farmers, who had played a definite role in political life, lost their influence to the rapidly growing Afrikaner bourgeoisie. The traditional alliance between all strata of Afrikaner society broke up; this initially helped the National Party with its doctrine of apartheid to come to power.

On the one hand, South African capitalism was discredited by racism. The coincidence of the interests of the state and private business was so glaring that both inevitably became targets of the mounting liberation struggle. On the other hand, South African capitalism began to choke in the corset of apartheid. The accelerated development of industry and the appearance of new, science-intensive branches required the creation of a stable market of skilled labour. The white labour force was obviously not enough. Apartheid could offer only the cheap migratory and unskilled labour of non-whites.

By placing the oppressed on the same footing, apartheid, far from protecting the whites against the "invasion of the barbarians", increased the black population's hatred and their determination to struggle. It was therefore necessary to open a venthole, to enable certain sections of the Africans to be fed at the boss' table. In other words, urgent measures were needed to strengthen and expand the regime's socio-racial foundation, to make South Africa look like a "normal" capitalist state, where class distinctions did not coincide so defiantly with racial ones.

Thus, in order to survive, to hold out in the face of

increasing pressure from the African majority, the Pretoria regime had to sacrifice some of its ideological principles and urgently reconstruct apartheid. For that purpose it needed a new, firm hand.

The Afrikaner big bourgeoisie decided that Pieter Botha would be the best man for the job. By that time he had acquired a firm reputation as a sagacious and farsighted minister who had succeeded in modernizing the war industry and reorganizing the armed forces. Thanks largely to Pieter Botha's efforts, South Africa became one of the world's ten biggest producers of arms. Moreover, his authority in diverse circles of the white elite enabled him within a short time to enlist majority support in the government and the National Party.

In short, monopoly capital hoped that this experienced, ruthless and pragmatic politician would be able to adapt the existing system of exploitation to the rapidly changing political situation and, by means of bold reforms, prevent the impending revolutionary explosion.

Living up to these hopes, Pieter Botha advanced a fundamentally new course based on the understanding that the former methods of exploitation and oppression did not work in the present conditions. He very accurately expressed the essence of his policy for the immediate future: "To adapt or die."

Botha mobilized the whites, forcing not only the army but also scholars and scientists, businessmen, diplomats and journalists to work for his idea. In a way his active policy shook up white society, ossified as it was in apartheid. In that initial period he almost seemed like a liberal, or at least a sensible politician capable of taking decisions on cardinal issues. To some extent this was so: Pieter Botha was South Africa's first leader to dare to make changes in the apartheid system and to offer something more than merely to fortify the besieged camp of the whites.

Pieter Botha legalized the activities of African trade unions. Black faces appeared in the army. Black policemen began to take part in dispersing demonstrations. Well-to-do Africans were allowed to lease land in the townships. Racial bans on many occupations were lifted. Expenditure on African education was increased. Mixed marriages were permitted. The pass law applicable to the black population

was repealed. The gap in wages between whites and blacks began to diminish, though it remained enormous. The stakes were placed on creating a black middle class that would be indebted to the apartheid regime for its status, and on strengthening the African bourgeoisie, which was not interested in revolutionary changes.

It would of course be an act of great injustice to suspect that the leader of the racist state wished to do away with apartheid. "Please, don't take me to be a suicide," he once replied to such an accusation. While his vision of a future South Africa differs in details from the Philistine's notions, it coincides in substance: the white minority must retain political and economic control. That is why Botha believed and sought to ensure that the process of reconstruction would have the same consequences for the whites as the loss of its tail for a lizard in danger.

Pieter Botha's reform programme implied, first and foremost, that the white minority should do everything in their power to retain their supremacy in the political and economic spheres, and that apartheid should be preserved under another guise as a subtle system of economic exploitation.

Botha was not leading his "white tribe", as the Afrikaners are sometimes called, to meet the black majority. He was taking them along the same road of Afrikanerism, military despotism, deceit and repressions.

Sometimes President Botha's words were so strong that even his associates could not conceal their sarcastic smiles. Here are some of the sharpest ones:

"Where in the whole wide world today can you find a more just society than South Africa has?"

"I have the cooperation of most black South Africans."

"I am a democrat."

"We don't shoot people who are in opposition to the government."

"Nelson Mandela can rot in prison until he dies or I die, whichever takes longer."

The President's Office had to make excuses more than once for this last utterance, made in public, in the presence of journalists. It said he had been misunderstood; he was only joking, hinting at his old age—he and Mandela are almost of the same age.

In fact it was anything but a joke. The President knew what he was saying.

Pieter Botha's reforms are often said to be somewhat revolutionary. From the point of view of the white minority this may be so. But the reforms have affected only the tip of the iceberg of apartheid—a very thin layer of it which would have vanished anyway out of its own uselessness. Having passed through that layer the reforms got stuck in the permafrost of a system knit together by white laws and white Philistinism.

Indeed, the prosperity of the white minority—better housing, highly paid jobs, a more nutritious diet, greater access to information, education and health care—is possible only within the framework of the apartheid system, with four-fifths of the population not receiving these benefits.

Official propaganda creates the illusion that the bleeding wound is being dressed; but in fact the two sides haven't come an inch closer. So far the abyss of injustice with its useless verbiage is only spanned by rare and frail bridges of reform.

From afar they look like bridges, but they will collapse if anyone walks on them.

In many respects life has become worse for the Africans, and it is embittered by frustrated hopes.

Meanwhile, on the white side of the apartheid line, there is more and more vicious grumbling from those who refuse to make any concessions. Even timid calls to restrict their privileges come up against firm resistance, though it may be invisible to an outsider.

The argument of the white minority goes like this: if we let the black mob into the areas where we live, allow them to be treated in our hospitals, to attend our schools, relax on the same beaches, everything will fall into decay before long. Firstly, because there will be several times more consumers, while the volume of services will remain the same. Secondly, will they be able to make proper use of all this? So isn't it better to leave everything as it is and keep first-class services for the few? After all, the blacks are used to a wretched life. Well, of course their life will also improve: housing construction will be increased in the townships, the "middle class" will have fresh opportunities, and political rights will be expanded—there will be

more democracy.

Never mind, the whites reassure one another, maybe everything will turn out all right.

Nor have the authorities changed their approach to the question of the living standards of the Africans. A quarter of a century ago Mandela said: **"The government often answers its critics by saying that Africans in South Africa are economically better off than the inhabitants of the other countries in Africa. I do not know whether this statement is true and doubt whether any comparison can be made without having regard to the cost-of-living index in such countries. But even if it is true, as far as the African people are concerned it is irrelevant. Our complaint is not that we are poor by comparison with people in other countries, but that we are poor by comparison with the white people in our own country, and that we are prevented by legislation from altering this imbalance."**

The all-powerful bureaucratic apparatus (which employs about 50 per cent of all able-bodied whites) holds up even those reforms which are sanctioned from the top, and threatens to invalidate the programme of change altogether unless the stability of its status is guaranteed. The bureaucrat will wreck any initiative even if it affects his welfare only very slightly. As long as he is "in the system", he will defend it to the end, blindly, without thinking of the consequences, without noticing that everything around is crumbling or decaying. The offspring of the system, its heart and soul, the bureaucracy will not give up anything of its own accord. Nothing but a fatal outcome for the system itself can force it out of its greed.

Pieter Botha himself may be aware that he will never get anywhere within the framework of the present system: his reforms, fitted into the straitjacket of apartheid, can only aggravate to the maximum the confrontation between the two political camps and deprive South Africa of a chance to peacefully resolve the accumulated problems.

It is not only counteraction by the bureaucracy that is standing in the way of genuine changes. The trouble is that the political leadership of the ruling party is as yet unable to free itself, if only partially, from the ideological trammels which strangle everything that in any way fails to accord

with 'the old dogmas. The custodians of ideological purity—rightly called "diehards" in South Africa—in themselves constitute a powerful braking mechanism, although many of them say they don't object to "some" changes. Regarding the reforms as a threat to their existence, the diehards express the interests of those social strata who are used to parasitizing on the majority of the population. They know that every step towards reform will entail more and more concessions, as a result of which they could lose all their privileges. The signs are that orthodox Afrikaners are not yet intellectually prepared for the transition to real changes.

The sacred cow of apartheid has long been dead, but the diehards continue to pray to its carcass.

Moreover, the ruling elite found itself unprepared for the fact that the reforms would develop a dynamism of their own, leading to unexpected consequences, with which, more often than not, the reformers themselves are dissatisfied. Despite the will of the authors of the new course, the reforms—for all their limitedness—have shifted the glacier of apartheid, and its accelerating downward slide has become irreversible.

Commenting on Pieter Botha's reforms, Mandela called them "pinpricks". **The central issue, he said, is the issue of political equality. Our programme is clear. It is based on three principles: a united South Africa without artificial "homelands"; black representation in the central Parliament; implementation of the "one man, one vote" principle.**

On the one hand, ten years of Pieter Botha's reforms have demolished many false stereotypes, forcing more people to ponder over the country's future and the sharp turn that is bound to occur in its fate. On the other hand, the reforms have failed to change South Africa's image as a racist, repressive state. The promised expansion of democracy turned out to be a new infringement of the black people's rights and freedoms. And assurances of peaceableness and of a desire for a dialogue with the rest of the world ended up with new acts of aggression.

Such is the fate of half measures: promises of good inevitably lead to evil, to the even greater deprivation of rights, and to lawlessness.

The country is actually living under wartime laws, the

black townships being the theatre of war. The ban on the activities of the main opposition parties and organizations is still in force. Political prisoners remain behind bars. New restrictions are being placed on the mass media. The persecution of intellectuals is being intensified. South African troops are constantly threatening the sovereignty of neighbouring states.

One obvious mistake made by the authorities is that they underestimate the strength of the opposition. Unlike in previous years, the anti-apartheid actions now have a sharper political and revolutionary edge. They are backed up by unprecedented pressure from outside. A new organizational force has appeared on the political scene of South Africa, namely, the trade unions, which have become the muscles of the anti-apartheid movement.

The ANC's prestige and popularity have sky-rocketed over the last quarter of a century. Today no reform has any chance of success without its involvement. In this sense the affirmation that a "government of the majority" is needed is true. The success or failure of the reforms and stability in the black townships depend to a great extent on whether the ban on ANC activities will be lifted and whether political prisoners, above all Nelson Mandela, will be released.

The South African sociologist Heribert Adam was right when he said that the mid-1980s saw the birth of a new formula for stability: universal suffrage and a single citizenship. These are the principles on which the ANC insists and which Mandela has upheld all his life; unless they are adopted, no progress to peace is possible.

At the same time, the ruling circles overestimate their own might. It is true that South Africa is not ruled by a feudal dynasty, a military dictatorship, or an autocratic regime that can be wiped out by a popular uprising. It is ruled by quite a close-knit ethnic group convinced that the Afrikaners as a people or race can survive only in South Africa (which they consider to be their rightful motherland) and only on condition that they retain their control over all key areas of life. The process of "de-ethnization" in the white community has been going on for quite a long time, but not so quickly as to lead to any cardinal changes in policy. And although the regime's potential is still unquestionably great, the overestimation of its strength is yet

another cause of Pieter Botha's failure: the success of the reforms cannot be secured through the repressions he is counting on.

One can say that the National Party, which has been ruling since 1948, has been altogether late with its reforms. Had it embarked on that course some thirty years ago, the majority might have responded. But that was then. Having gone through many stages of repression and deceit, the opposition to the regime has fundamentally changed. Everything or nearly everything that Pieter Botha is doing is either too little or too late. The conflict in South Africa has long outgrown the framework of minor concessions on the part of the authorities. The confrontation has grown to such an extent that nothing but a fundamentally new form of government and social system, under which the ethnic would give way to the national, can stop the spiralling violence.

Fathers and Children



"We believe that South Africa belongs to all the people who live in it, and not to one group, be it black or white." These words from the preamble to the Freedom Charter were said by Mandela at the Rivonia Trial. **"Political division, based on colour, is entirely artificial and, when it disappears, so will the domination of one colour group by another. The ANC has spent half a century fighting against racialism. When it triumphs it will not change that policy."**

These words contain another important and principled answer to the ANC's opponents, who accuse liberation movement units of terrorism. Such standard accusations are reiterated year after year, using almost the same words. After every police raid on a black settlement, after every forcible resettlement of thousands of impoverished Africans in a reservation, after every political assassination, the authorities stage a hate campaign against the ANC. The Ministry of Information puts out dozens of pamphlets,

bulletins and leaflets warning against the alleged intrigues of liberation organizations. The government-owned mass media regularly publish such material and the local administration, especially in rural areas, indoctrinates the population psychologically.

While pursuing a policy of state terrorism, the South African government blames its victims for the tense situation in the country.

We are reminded of Rhodesia under the illegal regime of Ian Smith, where the counterintelligence service set up a psychological warfare subunit. Immediately after the proclamation of Zimbabwe's independence I met an acquaintance of mine who had formerly worked in that subunit. A very pleasant young man and the son of very well-to-do parents, he had found himself there somewhat by chance: he was not admitted to the army in the field for health reasons. He worked in the department that prepared leaflets and interrogated captured guerrillas. One day I asked him whether the psychological indoctrination of the Africans was effective. "It produced little effect, if any," he replied. "They didn't believe us. We saw hatred in the eyes of the captives. We failed to carry out our assignment, which was to 'win the minds and hearts' of the villagers..."

The South African secret service doesn't seem to be any more successful with this assignment. The majority of Africans don't believe the fabrications about the ANC engaging in terrorism or "illegal" acts. The people consider the armed struggle against apartheid to be quite legitimate; they feel it is a natural reaction of the oppressed to tyranny and repressions.

The use of force by the ANC's armed detachments was from the outset anything but terrorism. This is clearly explained by Nelson Mandela, founder and first leader of Umkhonto we Sizwe:

"We did not want an inter-racial war, and tried to avoid it to the last minute... It was only when all else had failed, when all channels of peaceful protest had been barred to us, that the decision was made to embark on violent forms of political struggle, and to form Umkhonto we Sizwe. We did so not because we desired such a course, but solely because the government had left us with no other choice." Umkhonto's leadership set the task of de-

molishing the military-economic infrastructure of the apartheid system and of avoiding human sacrifice at any cost. Even when the government, in retaliation to such actions, hurled the entire might of its punitive apparatus at civilians, the ANC did not resort to vengeance.

Mandela called for the granting of equal political rights to the black population. He said this was "the only solution which will guarantee racial harmony and freedom for all." As to the outbursts of racial terror, Mandela openly declared that he considered racism to be a manifestation of barbarity no matter by whom it was professed, black or white.

But the inadequate response from the authorities and the kindling of racism in the white community ultimately led to fresh and fiercer outbursts of uncontrolled violence, which resulted in many casualties in the early 1960s. All that is happening in South African cities today—explosions in public places, car bombs, the murder of civilians—is a direct consequence of Pretoria's shortsighted policy of force. "...How could we continue to keep Africans away from terrorism?" Mandela asked. Today it is too late to ask such questions. Nowadays the black townships themselves decide how to retaliate against the government. The generation which has taken up arms today is the generation of Sharpeville and Soweto.

"We are preparing a terrible legacy for future generations," said Archbishop Desmond Tutu. "What are we doing to our children, what are we doing to our beautiful land? No country can afford to bleed as much as ours."

"Guerrillas have no definite age," say people in Soweto, Mamelodi, Langa and dozens of other black ghettos. Among those involved in continuous bloody violence are eight-year-olds who have never had a childhood.

The world opened up before them not with fairy-tale colours and promises of beautiful things, but with the thumping of soldiers' boots, the smell of burning and blood, the bang of firearms and cries for help. Ten-year-olds have already experienced beatings, jail and torture, and mourned over the death of their coevals. In the black ghettos of South Africa children ask questions and tackle problems which even adults scarcely give a thought to in normal, prosperous societies.

Today it is these young people who often decide how to conduct the war for their rights, how to fight for justice. "Our task is to destroy the fascist apartheid society and to build democracy and socialism," said one young fighter to a *Newsweek* correspondent in June 1988.

They are not in any doubt about what to do. In their ten-fifteen years they have learned to track down and ruthlessly punish their enemies. They cannot imagine any other life for themselves. They simply don't know anything different. Will they know in the near future?

They are fiercer than their fathers and less inclined towards compromise. Many feel that the whites must be fought by the same methods as the whites use against the Africans, that the more whites that are killed, the better, and that bombs must be planted in cafes, department stores and stadiums in order to cause panic among the whites and hit them harder.

After the government ban in early 1988 on the activities of the majority of democratic organizations and the introduction of martial law in the black townships, the young fighters were quick to learn new methods of struggle while in hiding. "The fighting forces of liberation can never stop advancing," a 14-year-old township activist told *Newsweek*.

These children embody South Africa's hope and tragedy. The sliding avalanche of apartheid has crippled them mentally, deprived them of childhood and thrown them into the boiling cauldron of bloody battles.

Does Pretoria know what kind of shoots will be yielded by the seeds of hatred sown in the townships? In fact it is these young street fighters who will bring South Africa into the 21st century. And it is they who will have to negotiate with the sons of the present leaders if their fathers' attempts fail.

Mandela and his comrades understood the scale of such a threat only too well and tried to prevent its materialization, to convince the white minority government of the need for a political solution to the race problem.

The questions Mandela asked his judges at the Rivonia Trial were not rhetorical at all. His apprehensions were confirmed by life. "How many more Sharpevilles would there be in the history of our country? And how many more Sharpevilles could the country stand without violence and

terror becoming the order of the day? And what would happen to our people when that stage was reached? ... And if this happened, how could black and white ever live together again in peace and harmony?"

Today there are still no answers to these questions. But it sometimes seems that the country will not be able to endure even one more Sharpeville, because violence and terror have actually become "the order of the day".

In early 1988 I had a talk with a white South African, a serious young man who was quite sober in his judgement of the present stage of the political struggle in South Africa. He said he considered himself a liberal and criticized the government in rather sharp terms, but when he discussed the ANC his tone was firm and uncompromising. His views about freedom fighters, although he was careful in choosing his words, corresponded with those expressed in Pretoria.

"The scale of the ANC's terrorist activity is becoming too dangerous," he said. "Do you realize what will happen if they begin operating in the white districts?"

"I do," I said, "it will be terrible, but so far the white districts live in peace. Meanwhile, over the past two years 2,500 people were killed, thousands were wounded, and lots of houses were destroyed in the black townships. Life is by no means normal there."

"And yet," my interlocutor argued, "if the ANC ceased its violence, then we liberals would have more opportunities to exert pressure on the government. Besides, the extreme right would be left with fewer trumps."

"OK," I said, "let's imagine that the ANC has declared an end to the armed struggle. Today, at this very moment, because the racist laws are still in force, political prisoners are still kept in jails, the state of emergency has not been lifted and the ANC is still banned. How would such a step be seen in South Africa and in other countries? Probably, only in one way—as a surrender to a stronger enemy, or as a betrayal. The Africans, and you know this even better than I do, will never agree to surrender. That is, the struggle will not end, but will, most probably, become more severe and unpredictable without the ANC's leadership and a specific political course."

"And yet," the South African insisted, "there's no alternative to ending the violence. The ANC must make the first

step..."

We went on arguing in this manner for a long time without coming to an agreement. I found myself thinking how deep the stereotypes in the minds of the whites really were that racist propaganda had managed to inculcate in them the image of a black blood-thirsty terrorist anxious to "rob and drive the white man into the sea".

The distortion of the meaning of words and whole concepts and the creation of false stereotypes have been going on for a long time now and can only have a harmful influence on people's way of thinking. Although such propaganda devices are meant mostly for the lower classes, they affect the upper ones, too.

So when we hear Pieter Botha's assertions that apartheid has ceased to exist, he probably believes what he says. When he says there are no reasons for the disturbances in the country, he is almost sincere about this. The well-off always think life is great and that all the problems have long been solved, except for perhaps a few little things. And so they can never understand why people are still dissatisfied. Botha often says that blacks in South Africa are far more educated and far better off than their northern brothers. And then he makes a conclusion which most whites agree with: the rebels do not represent the entire nation but are, rather, just a handful of terrorists instigated by communist agents.

With his subtle knowledge of the psychology of his "fellow tribesmen", Pieter Botha plays on their fear of future upheavals and enlarges on it by referring to the "constant communist threat".

The white Philistine, for instance, is sure that in socialist countries the word "white" is synonymous with "racist", "colonialist", "murderer"; that we share the view of extremists that white South Africans "must be driven into the sea"; that the Soviet Union is interested in maintaining the conflict situation in southern Africa because it covets the diamonds, gold, uranium and other valuable minerals found there, not to mention control over the strategic sea route around the Cape of Good Hope. That is why when Botha says that "the Russian bear" has got one foot in the doorway, the Afrikaners become hot with indignation; they band together in a burst of patriotism to defend their country against the "aggressor" and forget their differences

for the sake of the common aim. The image of the "treacherous Russian bear" is so deeply entrenched in the mind of the "average" Afrikaner that he has developed an "anti-communist instinct" that snaps into action at the mere hint of danger, whatever its actual source. As far as the Afrikaner is concerned, Moscow is at the root of everything.

Mandela—an African Nationalist



The fact that most white South Africans today still do not accept Mandela is not surprising.

It is much more surprising that there is a steadily growing number of people who appreciate Mandela's significance for the present and future of South Africa.

Moreover, this does not only refer to white adults who are aware of the great danger that apartheid poses for the country. The white youth too, including young Afrikaners, have been increasingly backing the demand to free Mandela. In 1985 and 1986, when unrest in the African townships was at its height, the London *Sunday Times* decided to find out how white South Africans were reacting to the aggravation of the domestic political situation. The results confirmed the conjecture that when the black majority and the world community exert maximum pressure on the Pretoria regime, far more whites call for quick changes and for the abolition of apartheid, while the government is more willing to agree to concessions.

Thus, while in August 1985 thirty-three per cent of the whites were dissatisfied with apartheid, a year later, the figure had increased by another twelve per cent. The number of whites who believed that apartheid would cease to exist in ten years' time went up by nine per cent (from 63 to 72 per cent). Finally, 16 per cent more whites (up from 40 to 56 per cent) favoured the release of Mandela.

It is characteristic that in those very years the authorities repealed some basic laws of apartheid (e. g. the law on mixed marriages, the pass law applicable to Africans, etc.), made concessions in labour legislation and, as already

mentioned, offered to free Mandela provided he agreed to a number of concessions.

The findings of *The Sunday Times* showed that contrary to the assertions of official propaganda in South Africa and some Western capitals, Pretoria does give way to force and pressure. As soon as it manages to slacken the pressure by means of repressions or political manoeuvres, the government and the majority of whites are no longer interested in reforms.

The propaganda stunt about Mandela being a "terrorist" and a "racist" no longer works.

Those who have heard his words know that he is sacrificing his life for the freedom of his people.

It has to be said that Mandela has never tried to conceal his sympathies for the communists. In his concluding speech at the Rivonia Trial in 1964 he said: "...for many decades communists were the only political group in South Africa who were prepared to treat Africans as human beings and their equals; who were prepared to eat with us; talk with us, live with us, and work with us. They were the only political group which was prepared to work with the Africans for the attainment of political rights and a stake in society. Because of this, there are many Africans who today tend to equate freedom with communism..."

"It is not only in internal political life that we count communists as amongst those who support our cause. In the international field, communist countries have always come to our aid."

At the same time Mandela has always emphasized that his views often differ from communist views, and that he is an African nationalist. "It is true ... that I have been influenced by Marxist thought. But this is also true of many of the leaders of the new independent states. Such widely different persons as Gandhi, Nehru, Nkrumah, and Nasser all acknowledge this fact. We all accept the need for some form of socialism to enable our people to catch up with the advanced countries of this world and to overcome their legacy of extreme poverty. But this does not mean we are Marxists." Mandela mentions one point on which he and Marxists differ: "From my reading of Marxist literature and from conversations with Marxists, I have gained the impression that com-

munists regard the parliamentary system of the West as undemocratic and reactionary. But, on the contrary, I am an admirer of such a system."

As can be seen from Mandela's articles and speeches, he dreams of a society of social harmony in a non-racial South Africa in which it will be possible to combine everything that is best both in East and West.

"The ideological creed of the ANC," he says, "is, and always has been, the creed of African Nationalism. It is not the concept of African Nationalism expressed in the cry, 'Drive the White man into the sea.' The African Nationalism for which the ANC stands is the concept of freedom and fulfilment for the African people in their own land."

African Nationalism and Afrikaner Nationalism. There is only a slight difference in the letters, but how the meaning is altered! So far these are two antagonists, although the supporters of both consider themselves South Africans, that is that South Africa is their homeland, and both are definitely entitled to do so. What is more, both the Africans and the Afrikaners put the freedom and aspirations of the people first. But while the Africans extend these concepts to all South Africans, the Afrikaners have only the whites in mind. Unlike the white minority, who insist on preserving racial discrimination in one form or another in the foreseeable future, the African majority stand for a unified state that is not divided on the basis of race and not weakened by racial or ethnic factors, like those formulated in the policy of bantustanization.

Herein lies the fundamental difference between the approaches of the Africans and the Afrikaners to the problems of a new South Africa.

A question invariably put to Mandela in his "jail-house interviews" is: "What would you do if you were free tomorrow?"

"I would continue the cause to which I have dedicated my life," he answers, then adds: "I would probably find myself behind bars again within 24 hours."

Those who think that Mandela has changed his views, that his attitude towards apartheid has become more mod-

erate and tolerant, are wrong. Mandela has remained the same freedom fighter as he was 25 years ago. Jail has, if anything, hardened his views and strengthened his conviction in the correctness of the path chosen by the black majority leaders. **"As far as I can judge,"** he said in one of his interviews, **"conditions in South Africa today remain the same as they were, if not worse... Today there is no alternative to an armed struggle against apartheid."**

The leaders of the white minority are to be blamed for what is happening today in South Africa (I mean the increasing violence, bitterness and alienation): each of them has tried to shift the task of solving the racial problems onto the shoulders of his "relief". This is what Jan Christian Smuts, Daniel Malan, Hendrik Verwoerd and Balthazar Johannes Vorster did. Pieter Botha has somewhat altered the tradition by trying to put apartheid's "Augean stables" in order, but the ten years of his stormy activities have ended up in timid half measures which, far from improving the situation, have further aggravated all the political and social problems.

Present-day South Africa faces the acute problem of trust between people. Although the stereotypes connected with race and colour of skin are gradually disappearing, this process is far too slow to be effective. Just hearing the white leaders speak, one can see that there is no trust at all on their part. On the contrary, they are hostile towards the black people and don't want to understand their plight. The only aim of the white leaders is to impose their own will and solutions. They want justice for the whites only. The whites are afraid that the blacks might treat them the same way they are treating the black people. South Africans often remember the remarkable prediction made by the great South African writer Alan Paton in his first novel *Cry, the Beloved Country*, published in 1948, when the National Party came to power: he foresaw the political situation that now prevails in the country. One of the main heroes of the novel, the black priest Msimangu, reflects on the time when the whites will at last understand the injustice of the system of racial discrimination: "I have one great fear in my heart, that one day when they are turned to loving, they will find we are turned to hating."

This threat has always existed, and still does today. Yet

there remains a great deal of goodwill among the black majority.

The majority of those who are vigorously resisting apartheid want justice for all, and for themselves they want a fair share of the common pie. But first it is necessary for the pie to actually be common property. So far only the whites can cut from it pieces for themselves; the blacks may have only crumbs.

The African National Congress, the oldest political organization in South Africa, today remains the only force which has a programme for the future development of South Africa and which takes into account the rights of all its inhabitants, regardless of the colour of their skin. It could well serve as a basis for bringing together all extreme viewpoints. And today the ANC is no less vital than it was in 1955, when it was accepted by representatives of numerous South African organizations which were at the time opposing apartheid from exclusively non-violent positions. A careful examination of the ANC's programme will show that it essentially accords with the interests of the majority of the South African population, whatever the colour of their skin.

I am sure in due course the Charter of Freedom will be reappraised by those who are now so frenzied in attacking the ANC and its appeals; they will then be surprised at how shortsighted they have been. I think it is relevant here to quote Alan Paton once again.

In the book under the symbolic title *Save the Beloved Country*, published forty years later, after the author's death, he wrote: "The great problem which confronts white South Africans and their country today is whether they will be able to undo the damage of the Verwoerdian doctrines and gain, to some extent at least, the trust and confidence of Black South Africa in the goodness of their intentions."

Despite the unjust verdict and the long years of humiliation, Mandela's attitude towards the whites has not changed. The achievement of political equality with the whites will not entail any infringement of the white minority's rights, he stresses. South Africa is the motherland of the whites as well as the blacks. We want them to live here together with us and share power with us.

Mandela now repeats what he used to say a quarter of a century ago that his ideal is a democratic, free and non-

racial society in which "all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities." "It is an ideal," he says today too, "which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

How can that ideal be attained? How can South Africa be rid of the looming threat of a civil war and senseless destruction? How can millions of innocent people be relieved of suffering? These are Mandela's primary concerns. He says he sees no alternative to an armed struggle, though not because he prefers that particular road. On the contrary, he would like changes for the better to be carried out by peaceful means. Mandela says that if, however, **the white minority leaders have no kindly feelings towards the black, if they don't want to talk with the black and discuss the problem of political equality, if they tell the black, in effect, that they must continue to have the status of the oppressed, then indeed the black will have no alternative to a violent struggle. But, Mandela is sure, in that struggle the black will win.**

Mandela has no illusions as regards the complexity of that struggle. He acknowledges the might of the government and its enormous potential to fight back. But by our actions, he emphasizes, we can make their life extremely difficult and force them to make concessions.

Sometimes Mandela is reproached for the fact that his views on violence contradict Christian morality; he is told that it would befit him, as a member of the Methodist Church, to condemn violence. Yes, I am a Christian, he agrees, but in our situation violence can well be combined with the concept of Christianity. We have no option. We are compelled to defend ourselves. Moreover, a Christian can and must justify violence directed against unjust authority. Remember how Christ drove the changers of money out of the temple. Those people personified evil. And the use of force against them was justified. The apartheid government is also a personification of evil and we have the right to use force against evil.

Washington Times journalists who interviewed Mandela in August 1985 tried to object, saying that Martin Luther King preached non-violence in the struggle for the civil

rights of Negroes in the United States. By the way, this argument is quite frequently put forward by the apologists of the Pretoria regime. It is basically erroneous since the status of black South Africans and that of the black Americans are incomparable. Take if only the fact that in the 1960s fighters for civil rights in the United States had access to institutions safeguarding human rights. The white community in the United States is far more liberal than the whites in South Africa, and the actions of the US government are subject to the law.

As for South Africa, Mandela told journalists, there are two worlds there: **"Democracy for the whites and colonial rule propped up by medieval spikes for the blacks. Equality will never become a reality if the power remains in the hands of the white minority. With such a political apportionment, South Africa remains an independent and sovereign country for whites only."**

"...The South African constitution excludes the blacks," said ANC President Oliver Tambo. **"They are outside the constitution. There is nothing they can do about decisions, policies of the South African regime. They don't belong. They are fighting from outside this white state. This is not a civil rights struggle at all. If we were part of the constitution, if we were citizens like any other, then of course there would be rights to fight for, as there are rights to fight for in the United States. But in South Africa the position is different."**

The revolution initiated by Nelson Mandela continues in South Africa. It consists of a relatively long period of revolutionary battles, international pressure, complicated political and diplomatic manoeuvres, and, to use a phrase of Lenin's, intermediate "counterrevolutionary convulsions" of the ruling system.

It is possible that this process will have a double outcome. We cannot, of course, totally rule out the possibility that the government, by making concessions, may wriggle out of the vice. But such an outcome is doubtful since the apartheid regime's support base is rapidly narrowing not

only inside South Africa but also beyond its borders. From the relative social outcast that South Africa was, say, in the 1960s, it has today turned into an absolute one.

That is why the other alternative—the victory of the anti-apartheid movement—is more probable. The disgraceful war that Pretoria is waging against the weak and impoverished African countries betrays the inherent aggressiveness of the apartheid regime. Because of the long and undivided rule of the ideology of racism, the black people have accumulated a tremendous reserve of revolutionary energy that is not so easy to neutralize. Ever greater numbers of people are breaking away from the white community and if they even do not join the opposite camp they become opponents of the ruling minority's ideology and policy. The liberation forces' allies—whether they are voluntary or involuntary, aware or unaware—as represented by intellectuals, members of the business community, religious figures and young people have been multiplying with every passing day. And this factor undoubtedly increases the probability of victory for the liberation forces.

A hundred years ago the eminent South African lady Olive Schreiner warned her fellow-white men blinded by racism saying that if the white see in the black man nothing but an implement of labour, if he is treated not as a person but merely as an implement, if the white settle millions like him for ever in fenced-off barracks and slums, if the white don't give him citizenship, if the white destroy his social organization and don't help him to participate in the common life of South Africa, if the white reduce these masses to the condition of a vast seething ignorant proletariat, then she would let the curtain fall over the future of South Africa.

What a pity that the racists of South Africa rarely open history textbooks. If they did, they would find not only prophecies regarding the destinies of unjust regimes, but also accounts of the ignominious downfall that has always come to those taking the kind of road they, the racists, have taken.

Mandela has warned against such a downfall many a time.

Mandela and South Africa's future are inseparable. That is why it is in the interests of all South Africans to release him.

To free Mandela would be a step towards rational compromise. It would generate greater hopes of a peaceful outcome to the protracted crisis. It would obliterate the mistrust. It would hold off the catastrophe which awaits South Africa if it continues to enslave its black citizens.

Борис Рубенович Асоян
НЕЛЬСОН МАНДЕЛА
Серия: Патриот, борец, гуманист
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